

British Broadcasting Corporation

Confidential

AN AUDIENCE RESEARCH REPORT

(Week 39)

VR79/416

DR. WHO

Destiny of the Daleks, by Terry Nation

Producer: Graham Williams

Saturdays, 1st to 22nd September 1979, 6.15-6.40pm, BBC-1

1. Size of audience (based on results of the Survey of Listening and Viewing).

The average audience for the four parts in this series is estimated at 25.8% of the United Kingdom population (13.5 million viewers). Audiences at the same time on BBC-2 ranged from 0.4% (210,000) for Diary of Britain to 24.1% (12.6 million) for Cricket. No programmes were shown on ITV.

2. Reaction of audience (based on 302 questionnaires completed by 17% of the Viewing Panel).

The reactions of this sample of the audience were distributed as follows:-

A+	A	B	C	C-
%	%	%	%	%
14	42	31	10	3

giving a retrospective Reaction Index of 64 for the series as a whole. Individual reported editions in this series had Reaction Indices of 67 in Week 36 and 63 in Week 38, while earlier in the year in Weeks 3, 4 and 9 the programme had indices of 63, 65 and 66 respectively.

3. The bulk of those reporting had seen three or four episodes in this four-part story, as the figures show:-

<u>Number of programmes seen:</u>		%
Four		42
Three		25
Two		17
One		7
Not sure		9

4. This sample audience was roughly equally divided between male and female respondents. The age distribution is given below:-

	%
12-19 years	16
20-29 "	21
30-49 "	40
50-64 "	17
65+ "	6

Continued/.....

DR. WHO (continued)

5. The latest Dr. Who story in which he encountered his arch enemies, the Daleks, met with quite a favourable response from those reporting; most viewers found the programmes enjoyable, feeling that the plot had been a good one. The teenage and adult audience did not find the story particularly exciting or at all frightening but they felt that children did. 'The Daleks always create good opposition' was the general view and respondents said that Dr. Who was 'always reliable entertainment'. There were, however, a number who were unenthusiastic about the series, finding the story uninteresting - 'very uninspiring, no real plot' - though a few allowed that it would appeal to the younger audience and it seemed that some watched through their family's choice rather than their own.
6. Viewers generally thought the acting good and if one or two were not keen on Romana (Lalla Ward) as the new assistant, an equal number found her suitable in this role. Tom Baker was often praised for his portrayal of the central character, a few adding that his was 'the best Dr. Who of all'. Hardly any agreed with the respondent who said that there was 'little scope for acting', most finding it up to standard.
7. Similarly, there were few criticisms of the special effects and, viewers said, the series was 'very well produced'. They often deemed the visual and sound effects first-class and also commended the sets, camera-work and make-up.
8. 46% of those reporting had children under the age of fifteen watching with them (and, indeed, 16% of respondents were aged between twelve and nineteen). Viewers usually noted an enthusiastic response from their children though some, notably between the ages of eleven and fifteen, were apparently unimpressed by the series. It seemed that only those under seven were scared by the programmes' content and few parents criticised the series on this point; as one remarked, 'all children watch Dr. Who happily and while at times are slightly frightened refuse to stop watching'. Indeed, most of the children found the series exciting and enjoyable; the Daleks obviously appealed to them and, it was often said, they were rivetted to the set during the programme.
9. Given a choice of several formats for the stories, viewers indicated their preferences as follows:-

	%
Like stories in four or six episodes	42
Would like a longer complete story each week	38
Would like a longer story in more episodes	5
Not sure	15

The idea of longer series was usually dismissed because respondents felt that children would lose interest if a story continued for too long, shorter sequences being easier to follow. Apart from those who were undecided, the remainder of the sample audience were almost equally divided between those who favoured the present format of a series of stories in four or six episodes and those who would like a longer complete story each week. The advantage of the latter, they said, was that they could follow the series even if they missed programmes and that a whole story would be more interesting. Those who preferred episodes felt that the anticipation each week made the stories more enjoyable - 'four episodes mean something to look forward to'.

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DR. WHO (continued)

10. Viewers were further asked if they liked the present timing or if various alternatives would be more convenient, with results as follows:-

<u>Most convenient timing:</u>	<u>%</u>
Present timing	65
Later Saturday evening	11
Sunday afternoon	12
Sunday evening	3
Weekday	9

Clearly, few would prefer any other timing to the present one (and these for diverse reasons), the general response being to 'leave well alone' this traditional and suitable viewing time.

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